Unlocking the secrets

Prof. Michael Lewis speaks on xerostomia at the International Symposium on Dental Hygiene in Glasgow

By Lisa Townshend, DT U.K. Edition

The international Symposium on Dental Hygiene (ISDH), held at the SECC in Glasgow, Scotland, was a truly international event with more than 1,500 delegates attending from all parts of the globe.

One of the most talked-about issues at the event was the rising occurrence of xerostomia in patients. So it was unsurprising that it was a packed room for Prof. Michael Lewis’ presentation, “The role of the dental hygienist in the diagnosis and management of dry mouth in association with GSK.”

Lewis is professor of oral medicine and associate dean for post-graduate studies in the school of dentistry at Cardiff University. He is also dean of studies in the school of dentistry at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

The lecture began with Lewis setting the scene for the lecture with his alternative title “Unlocking the secrets of saliva.” His aim was to inform delegates where saliva comes from, its components, the effects of reduced salivary production and what can be done to help patients.

Lewis explained that there are three major paired glands that produce 95 percent of saliva: the parotid (60 percent), the submandibular (30 percent) and the sublingual (5 percent). The rest is produced by more than 600 minor or accessory glands mainly found in the lips, cheek and palate.

Lewis detailed how salivary flow rate is neurally controlled: it is excited by taste and mechanical stimuli, but inhibited by feelings such as anxiety. With its importance in functions such as speech, as a buffer against acid attack, cleansing antimicrobial actions, etc., a reduced flow rate soon manifests as a problem. Symptoms often mentioned by patients include a lack of taste, difficulty in swallowing and increased effort when speaking.

As clinicians, immediate signs manifesting in the mouth include no saliva pooling in the mouth, frothy or cloudy saliva, sticky/erythematous mucosa, candidosis and angular cheilitis. One big marker for xerostomia, said Lewis, is the occurrence of cervical caries and failed restorations.

Xerostomia is often a complaint from patients with underlying causes, including drugs, Sjögren’s Syndrome, radiotherapy, undiagnosed or poorly controlled diabetes, dehydration and the absence of salivary glands.

Moving from the theoretical, Lewis then discussed what clinicians can do for patients presenting with dry mouth. He stressed the importance of investigation into the causes of dry mouth for that patient to ensure any underlying condition has been identified or particular medication use is explored.

Means of investigation can include clinical exam (discussion with patient), appearance of patient (i.e., face, hands, gait), appearance of saliva, “mirror sticks test” (a dental mirror will often stick to the buccal mucosa if there is reduced saliva), salivary flow rate tests, haematological tests, sialography and labial gland biopsy.

Once the cause of the condition has been indentified, it can then focus the minds of both clinician and patient on how to manage it, said Lewis.

For example, it may be possible to suggest a change in medication to one that does not list dry mouth as a side effect, or a diagnosis of diabetes should see improved glycaemic control on behalf of the patient and a resolution of dry-mouth symptoms. There are many salivary substitutes that can be recommended. Lewis described a few plus the benefits and disadvantages of using them.

The most graphic disadvantage was for Salinum, described as “like licking a cricket bat!” Oral-care systems such as the Biotène range have proved very popular with patients due to their formulation and ease of use.

Conclusion

Professor Lewis’ easy delivery style and obvious enthusiasm for the subject matter made this lecture a resounding success for me. It was both informative and practical, allowing delegates to really think about the diagnosis and management of xerostomia in patients, as well as highlighting once more how the oral cavity can be a window into the overall health of the human body.

The ISDH 2010 was organized by the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) under the auspices of the International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH).

The venue for the event was the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre on the banks of the river Clyde in Glasgow. The ISDH 2010 is the only international symposium specifically for dental hygienists and dental therapists.
LUMINEERS Destination Education announces two new Las Vegas events

Combine Las Vegas and practice-changing continuing education and you get LUMINEERS Destination Education’s (DE) next two events at the new ARIA Resort & Casino in Las Vegas from Nov. 5–7 and May 27–29.

According to the organizers, LUMINEERS DE is redefining continuing education in a powerful way. Both the November 2009 program at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and the June program at the ARIA Resort & Casino were sold out.

More than 1,300 dental professionals attended these two programs and were wowed by the quality of both the education and the experience, organizers said, adding that dentists, dental assistants, hygienists, patient coordinators and front office team members all found a lot to learn.

The next program will feature the addition of Snap-On Smile, which is being supported by one of the largest TV campaigns in dentistry. The program will not only cover proper clinical training technique on the procedure but will also cover practice growth methods and give dentists the opportunity to sign up to receive patient referrals from the TV campaign.

“I’m not afraid to try new things, and this program was awesome!,” said Dr. Edward Wiener of Germantown, Tenn.

“This is what C.E. should be: high-quality instructors and education, along with meticulous attention to the overall experience. One thing that blew me away: We all got to go to every session together. By learning together, we came back ready to grow the practice together and got started right away.”

Since its inception in 2003, DE has focused on the possibilities represented by the minimal-prep LUMINEERS procedure to the dental practice. Today, the program has dramatically expanded to include Snap-On Smile, lesion detection, endodontics, implants and case and financial presentations.

And there is even more to come: more speakers and more breakouts. Organizers say the new LUMINEERS hands-on sessions and team member breakouts will be even more dynamic than before.

“LUMINEERS Destination Education events are structured to maximize practice-changing learning, but we never forget the quality of the experience,” said David Jordan, ASCR’s director of education.

“That’s why we’re always at the coolest resorts and feature outstanding entertainment. Great bands and motivating keynote speakers make this the team event for every practice. Work hard. Play hard. We’ll do our best to make both of those happen.”

Beginning this fall, a new two-day DE event will be offered in New York, Los Angeles, Miami and in many other destination locations, making it more convenient than ever to experience what DE has to offer.

Full program information, course dates, locations, speakers and more can be found at www.ascredu.org or by calling (805) 547-7996.

Exclusive content, such as pictures, video content and program promotions, can also be found on Facebook by searching “LUMINEERS Destination Education.”

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